How Marx, Lenin and Stalin Differed

A Marxist Analysis of Theory and Practice

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Author’s Note

The purpose of this short treatise is to restore the correct theoretical and historical relationship between the three figures who are most often linked under the name “Marxism-Leninism.”

Karl Marx is the founder of scientific socialism. His work provides the permanent foundation: historical materialism, the critique of political economy, the analysis of surplus value, the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the perspective of the withering away of the state.

V. I. Lenin is the great revolutionary who developed Marxism for the epoch of imperialism. He added the theory of monopoly capitalism, the concept of the vanguard party, the Soviet form of proletarian power, and the concrete strategy for the victory of the working class in a backward country, while remaining firmly within the internationalist and democratic framework established by Marx.

Stalinism, by contrast, represents a bureaucratic, nationalist and terrorist deformation of both Marx and Lenin. Under Stalin the living method of dialectical analysis was replaced by rigid dogma, proletarian democracy was destroyed, internationalism was subordinated to the interests of a privileged state apparatus, and the perspective of the withering away of the state was abandoned in favour of the permanent strengthening of bureaucratic power.

This treatise is written from the standpoint that Marxism remains the most correct scientific theory of the proletarian revolution, that Lenin’s contributions constitute its necessary revolutionary development, and that Stalinism must be clearly distinguished from both as a parasitic distortion that ruined the original content. Only by drawing this sharp line can the authentic principles of Marx and Lenin be defended against both capitalist ideology and bureaucratic falsification.

The analysis that follows is based on the original theoretical writings and on the historical practice that flowed from them. Its aim is not academic neutrality but theoretical clarity in the service of the working-class movement.

Karl Marx: The Founder of Scientific Socialism

Karl Marx stands as the founder of scientific socialism. Together with Friedrich Engels he transformed socialism from a moral or utopian aspiration into a rigorous analysis of the real movement of history and of the capitalist mode of production. His work provides the permanent theoretical foundation upon which all subsequent genuine revolutionary theory must rest.

Historical Materialism and the Critique of Political Economy

The starting point of Marx's thought is historical materialism. In the Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859) he formulated the fundamental proposition that the economic structure of society — the relations of production — constitutes the real foundation upon which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of development the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution.

This method allowed Marx to treat capitalism not as an eternal or natural order, but as a historically specific mode of production that arose, developed, and must necessarily pass away. The critique of political economy, carried out most fully in *Capital*, is the concrete application of historical materialism to the dominant system of the modern world. Marx did not invent a new moral code; he laid bare the economic laws of motion of capitalist society.

Surplus Value, Commodity Fetishism and the Laws of Capitalist Development

At the heart of Marx's economic analysis stands the theory of surplus value. The worker sells labour-power as a commodity. The value of labour-power is determined by the labour-time necessary for its reproduction (the means of subsistence of the worker and his family). Yet during the working day the worker produces a greater value than the value of his own labour-power. This excess is surplus value — the unpaid labour appropriated by the capitalist. Profit, interest and rent are merely forms of this surplus value.

Alongside this analysis Marx revealed the phenomenon of commodity fetishism. In a society based on private production and exchange, the social relations between people appear as relations between things. Value seems to be a natural property of the commodity rather than the expression of human labour. This mystification conceals the reality of exploitation and makes the capitalist system appear natural and eternal.

From these foundations Marx derived the principal laws of capitalist development: the progressive concentration and centralisation of capital, the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, the formation of a reserve army of labour, the periodic outbreak of crises of overproduction, and the increasing

polarisation of society into a small class of owners of the means of production and a large class of propertyless proletarians. Capitalism develops the productive forces on an unprecedented scale, yet it does so through the exploitation and degradation of the working class. In this contradiction lies the historical necessity of its overthrow.

The Dictatorship of the Proletariat as Transitional Form

Marx did not regard the socialist revolution as the immediate introduction of a fully developed communist society. Between capitalist and communist society lies a period of revolutionary transformation. Corresponding to this is a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*, 1875).

This dictatorship is the rule of the working class organised as the ruling class. Its task is to suppress the resistance of the former exploiters, to expropriate the means of production, and to reorganise society on the basis of collective ownership. It is not an end in itself. Once class distinctions have been abolished and the means of production are under the control of the associated producers, the state as a special repressive apparatus begins to wither away. The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things.

Marx’s conception is therefore both revolutionary and emancipatory. The working class must conquer political power, but the ultimate goal is a classless, stateless society in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all. The dictatorship of the proletariat is the necessary bridge, not a permanent form of rule.

These three elements — historical materialism, the critique of political economy centred on surplus value, and the theory of the transitional dictatorship of the proletariat — constitute the core of Marx’s theoretical legacy. They form the unbreakable foundation upon which Lenin later built, and against which the bureaucratic deformations of Stalinism must be measured.

The Withering Away of the State

Marx’s theory of the state is inseparable from his theory of classes. The state is not a neutral arbiter standing above society; it is a product of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms and an instrument for the oppression of one class by another. In *The Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels already

declared that the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.

Once the proletariat has conquered power and has begun to abolish the conditions that give rise to class distinctions, the need for a special repressive apparatus gradually disappears. Engels later formulated the classic expression of this perspective: the state is not “abolished”; it withers away. As the government of persons is replaced by the administration of things and by the conduct of the processes of production, the public functions of the state lose their political character and are transformed into simple administrative functions. The ultimate goal of the proletarian revolution is therefore not the perfection of the state but its progressive disappearance in a classless society.

This perspective stands in the sharpest opposition both to the anarchist demand for the immediate abolition of all authority and to any theory that treats the strengthening of the state as a permanent socialist principle.

Internationalism and the Self-Emancipation of the Working Class

From the beginning Marx insisted on the international character of the proletarian movement. The working men have no country. The emancipation of the working class is a national task only in form; in content it is international. The famous closing words of the *Manifesto* — “Workers of all countries, unite!” — express this principle in its most concentrated form.

Equally fundamental is the principle of self-emancipation. The emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself. No benevolent elite, no substitute, no bureaucratic apparatus standing above the masses can carry out this historical task. Marx repeatedly opposed both Blanquist conspiracy and reformist substitutionism. The working class must organise itself as a class, develop its own political party, and conquer power through its own conscious action. This principle of self-emancipation is the democratic heart of Marxism and the strongest barrier against any later bureaucratic deformation.

Attitude to Property: Abolition of the Means of Production as Capital, Preservation of Personal Property

Marx drew a precise distinction between two kinds of property. The decisive target of the proletarian revolution is private property in the means of production — capital in the form of factories, land used as a means of exploitation, banks and instruments of labour. It is this form of property that enables the capitalist class to appropriate the unpaid labour of others.

Personal property, by contrast — the articles of consumption, the dwelling, the furniture, the savings earned by one's own labour — is not the object of abolition. In the *Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels explicitly rejected the charge that communists wished to abolish the right of personally acquiring property as the fruit of a man's own labour. What is abolished is the bourgeois form of property that turns living labour into a mere means for the expansion of accumulated labour.

In the lower phase of communist society (socialism) the principle "from each according to his ability, to each according to his work" still prevails. Individuals receive consumer goods in proportion to the labour they contribute (after the necessary social deductions). These consumer goods become personal property. Only in the higher phase of communism, when the productive forces have been developed to a much higher level, does the principle "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" become possible.

Thus Marx's programme is neither the equalisation of poverty nor the confiscation of every personal possession. It is the socialisation of the means of production so that the associated producers may collectively control the conditions of their own labour, while personal property in articles of consumption is preserved and even expanded.

These three further elements — the withering away of the state, proletarian internationalism combined with self-emancipation, and the clear distinction between productive and personal property — complete the essential core of Marx's theoretical system. They form the standard against which both the revolutionary development carried out by Lenin and the bureaucratic distortion introduced by Stalin must be measured.

Attitude to the Old Ruling Classes (Expropriation of Economic Power, Not Indiscriminate Destruction)

Marx's approach to the former ruling classes followed directly from his analysis of class society. The decisive question was never the personal origin or the individual character of members of the old dominant classes, but the economic power they exercised through ownership of the means of production. The proletarian revolution aims at the expropriation of that

economic power — the large landed estates, the factories, the banks — not at the physical destruction of every person who had belonged to the former ruling layers.

In his historical writings, particularly on the French Revolution and the revolutions of 1848, Marx supported the decisive breaking of feudal and capitalist property relations. At the same time he distinguished between active counter-revolutionary resistance and the possibility of integrating individuals who accepted the new social order. The Paris Commune of 1871, which Marx regarded as the first living example of the dictatorship of the proletariat, showed both the necessity of firm measures against the armed enemies of the working class and the possibility of a new form of power based on the self-government of the producers rather than on indiscriminate terror.

Marx therefore rejected two symmetrical errors: on the one hand the reformist illusion that the old ruling classes would peacefully surrender their economic power, and on the other hand any policy of blind vengeance that treated an entire social layer as permanently irredeemable. The task of the proletariat is to abolish the conditions that allow one class to live by the exploitation of another. Once those conditions are abolished, former members of the old ruling classes who are willing to live by their own labour can be absorbed into the new society as ordinary citizens. Those who take up arms against the revolution must be suppressed, but the suppression is a measure of class defence, not an end in itself.

This measured, class-based approach — expropriation of the means of production combined with the possibility of integration of non-hostile individuals — forms an essential part of Marx’s legacy. It stands in clear contrast to later policies of mass terror and collective punishment that destroyed large sections of the educated and technically skilled population without regard to their actual attitude toward the new order.

With this final point the exposition of Marx’s foundational theory is complete. Historical materialism, the critique of political economy, the dictatorship of the proletariat as a transitional form, the withering away of the state, proletarian internationalism and self-emancipation, the distinction between productive and personal property, and the class approach to the former ruling layers together constitute the scientific core of Marxism. It is this core that Lenin later developed for the conditions of the imperialist epoch, and it is against this core that the bureaucratic deformations of Stalinism must be judged.

V. I. Lenin: Revolutionary Development of Marxism in the Imperialist Epoch

V. I. Lenin stands as the great revolutionary who developed Marxism for the new historical conditions of the twentieth century. He did not revise or replace Marx's foundations; he applied and enriched them in the epoch of monopoly capitalism and proletarian revolution. Where Marx had analysed classical competitive capitalism, Lenin analysed its highest stage. Where Marx had formulated the general theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat, Lenin gave it concrete organisational and state forms capable of leading the working class to victory in a backward country and of defending that victory against world imperialism.

Imperialism as the Highest Stage of Capitalism

In *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916) Lenin demonstrated that capitalism had undergone a qualitative transformation. Free competition had given way to the dominance of monopolies. Banking capital had fused with industrial capital to form finance capital. The export of capital had acquired decisive importance alongside the export of commodities. The territorial division of the world among the great powers had been completed. Capitalism had become parasitic and decaying; the great imperialist powers lived increasingly by the exploitation of the rest of the world.

This analysis had profound revolutionary consequences. Because imperialism unevenly develops the different countries and creates a world system of oppression, the proletarian revolution could break out first not in the most advanced capitalist countries but in the "weakest link" of the imperialist chain. Russia in 1917 was that weakest link. Lenin's theory of imperialism thus explained both the possibility and the necessity of the October Revolution, while remaining fully within the framework of Marx's law of uneven development and of the international character of the proletarian struggle.

The Theory of the Vanguard Party and Democratic Centralism

Marx had insisted that the working class must organise itself as an independent political party. Lenin developed this principle into the theory of the vanguard party under the specific conditions of Tsarist autocracy and of the struggle against opportunism inside the labour movement.

In *What Is to Be Done?* (1902) Lenin argued that socialist consciousness does not arise spontaneously from the economic struggle of the workers; it must be brought to the working class from without by a party of professional revolutionaries guided by scientific theory. The party must be a disciplined organisation capable of acting as a single body, yet it must also preserve internal democracy. This combination was later formulated as democratic centralism: freedom of discussion, unity of action.

Lenin's conception of the party was never that of a bureaucratic apparatus standing above the class. The party was to be the most conscious section of the proletariat, closely linked to the masses, educating them and learning from them. It was an instrument for the self-emancipation of the working class, not a substitute for it. Lenin repeatedly fought both against the dissolution of the party into the spontaneous movement and against the transformation of the party into a closed circle of functionaries.

The Soviet Form of Proletarian Power (*The State and Revolution*)

Lenin's most important contribution to the Marxist theory of the state is contained in *The State and Revolution* (1917). Writing in the heat of the revolutionary crisis, he restored and defended Marx's teaching against the opportunist distortions of the Second International.

The state, Lenin insisted, is a product and a manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms. It is an organ of class rule. The proletariat cannot simply take over the ready-made state machine of the bourgeoisie and use it for its own purposes; it must smash that machine and replace it with a new type of state. The model for this new state was the Paris Commune, further developed in the Russian Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies.

The Soviet state was to be characterised by the following features: all officials elected and subject to recall at any time; salaries of officials not exceeding workers' wages; the replacement of the standing army by the armed people; the fusion of legislative and executive functions. Such a state would already be a state "in the process of withering away." It would be a thousand times more democratic for the working masses than any bourgeois republic, while remaining a dictatorship toward the former exploiting classes.

Lenin thus gave concrete political form to Marx's concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Soviets were not a parliamentary talking-shop but working bodies through which the masses themselves exercised power. This was the living realisation of the principle of self-emancipation.

These three contributions — the theory of imperialism, the vanguard party based on democratic centralism, and the Soviet form of proletarian power — constitute the core of Lenin's revolutionary development of Marxism. They equipped the working class with the theoretical and organisational means necessary for victory in the imperialist epoch while remaining faithful to the fundamental principles laid down by Marx.

The Alliance of the Proletariat with the Peasantry

Russia was a predominantly peasant country. Marx had already indicated that in such countries the proletariat must win the support of the rural poor if it was to hold power. Lenin turned this general indication into a concrete strategic line.

He divided the peasantry into three main layers: the poor peasants (semi-proletarians), the middle peasants, and the rural bourgeoisie (kulaks). The proletariat's firm alliance was with the poor peasants; the middle peasants were to be neutralised or gradually won over; the kulaks were a hostile class. The Decree on Land of October 1917, which abolished landlord property and placed the land at the disposal of the peasants, was the practical expression of this policy. It sealed the alliance between the working class and the broad peasant masses and isolated the landlords and the capitalist elements in the countryside.

Lenin never treated the peasantry as a single reactionary mass, nor did he attempt to force it into socialism by administrative decree. The alliance was based on the real interests of the labouring peasants and on their voluntary support for Soviet power. This policy was one of the decisive conditions for the victory and survival of the October Revolution.

Internationalism and the Communist International

Lenin remained a consistent proletarian internationalist. He regarded the Russian Revolution not as an end in itself but as the first link in the chain of the world revolution. The isolation of the Soviet republic was a temporary misfortune, not a strategic principle.

In 1919 he founded the Communist International (Comintern) in order to break with the opportunistic Second International and to create a genuine world party of the proletariat. The Comintern was to educate and organise the working class of all countries for the overthrow of capitalism on an international scale. Lenin repeatedly stressed that the final victory of

socialism in Russia could be secured only through the victory of the proletarian revolution in the advanced countries of Europe. The defence of the Soviet republic was therefore inseparable from the advancement of the world revolution.

This internationalist orientation stands in the sharpest contrast to any theory that treats the construction of socialism in one country as a self-sufficient and permanent task.

Flexibility in Economic Policy (War Communism → NEP)

Lenin combined theoretical firmness with great practical flexibility. During the Civil War and foreign intervention the Soviet government was forced to adopt the measures known as War Communism: requisitioning of grain, centralised allocation of resources, and the virtual suppression of private trade. These measures were dictated by military necessity, not by any dogmatic blueprint.

As soon as the Civil War ended, Lenin recognised that War Communism had exhausted itself and was producing a dangerous rupture between the working class and the peasantry. At the Tenth Party Congress in 1921 he introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP). Grain requisitioning was replaced by a tax in kind; private trade was permitted within limits; small-scale private enterprise was allowed to revive. The commanding heights of the economy — large-scale industry, banking, foreign trade — remained in the hands of the workers' state.

NEP was not a return to capitalism but a temporary retreat designed to restore the shattered economy, to strengthen the alliance with the peasantry, and to create the material conditions for a later advance toward socialism. Lenin described it as a form of "state capitalism" under the dictatorship of the proletariat — a transitional measure that used market relations while keeping political power and the decisive means of production in the hands of the working class.

This flexible, realistic approach demonstrated Lenin's method: concrete analysis of concrete conditions, readiness to change tactics when the situation changed, and constant attention to the living relationship between the proletariat and the peasantry. It was the opposite of administrative adventurism or of any attempt to leap over necessary stages by force.

These three further contributions — the alliance with the peasantry, consistent internationalism through the Comintern, and the flexible transition from War Communism to NEP — complete the picture of Lenin as the revolutionary who developed Marxism for the imperialist epoch while remaining faithful to its fundamental principles.

Utilisation of Specialists and Integration of Non-Hostile Elements of the Old Society

Lenin understood that the working class, upon taking power in a backward country, could not immediately dispense with the technical, scientific and administrative knowledge accumulated under the old regime. In numerous speeches and articles he insisted that the proletariat must learn to use bourgeois specialists, placing them under strict workers' control and paying them higher salaries when necessary.

He rejected the ultra-left demand to smash all specialists simply because of their social origin. Engineers, military officers, scientists and administrators who were prepared to work honestly under Soviet power were to be utilised for the construction of the new society. Many members of the former nobility and of the old technical intelligentsia were in fact integrated into the Red Army, the state apparatus and the economic institutions during the Civil War and the early years of Soviet power. Lenin's criterion was not social origin but political attitude and practical usefulness to the workers' state.

This policy flowed directly from Marx's distinction between the expropriation of the means of production and the treatment of individuals. It was a class policy, not a policy of collective vengeance. By integrating non-hostile elements of the old society, Lenin sought both to preserve the technical capacities of the country and to demonstrate that the dictatorship of the proletariat was directed against the economic power of the exploiters, not against every person who had belonged to the former ruling layers.

Warnings against Bureaucracy and the Concentration of Power (Testament)

In the last period of his active political life Lenin became increasingly concerned with the growth of bureaucracy inside the Soviet state and the party. He saw that the isolation of the revolution, the cultural backwardness of the country and the influx of careerist elements into the apparatus created a real danger of degeneration.

In his final writings, known as the Testament (December 1922 – January 1923), Lenin gave a series of concrete warnings. He noted that Stalin, as General Secretary, had concentrated enormous power in his hands and was not always capable of using that power with sufficient caution. Lenin proposed that the comrades find a way to remove Stalin from this post and appoint someone "more tolerant, more loyal, more polite and more considerate to the comrades, less capricious, etc." He also proposed measures to strengthen the

Central Committee, to improve the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, and to combat the bureaucratic deformation of the state apparatus.

These warnings demonstrate that Lenin was fully aware of the danger that the workers' state could become alienated from the working class and that power could be concentrated in the hands of a bureaucratic hierarchy. He did not treat this danger as inevitable; he tried to fight it while he still had the strength. The fact that his advice was not followed after his death belongs to the subsequent history of the degeneration, not to Lenin's own theory or practice.

With these final points the exposition of Lenin's contribution is complete. He developed Marxism for the imperialist epoch by analysing monopoly capitalism, creating the organisational forms of the vanguard party and the Soviets, forging the alliance with the peasantry, upholding consistent internationalism, applying flexible economic tactics, utilising the specialists of the old society, and warning against the bureaucratic dangers that threatened the young workers' state. In all these respects he remained the faithful and creative continuer of Marx.

Stalinism as Distortion and Degeneration

After the death of Lenin in 1924 the Soviet Union entered a new period. The objective difficulties — isolation of the revolution, economic backwardness, exhaustion after the Civil War — were immense. Yet the way in which these difficulties were answered produced a qualitative change in the character of the regime. Under Stalin the living content of Marxism-Leninism was progressively replaced by a bureaucratic, nationalist and terrorist system that stood in fundamental contradiction to the principles of Marx and Lenin.

"Socialism in One Country" as Strategic Turn

The most important theoretical turn was the elevation of the formula "Socialism in One Country" into a permanent strategic doctrine. Lenin had always regarded the Russian Revolution as the beginning of the world revolution. He repeatedly stated that the final victory of socialism in Russia could be secured only through the victory of the proletariat in the advanced capitalist countries. The isolation of the Soviet republic was a temporary and dangerous situation, not a new theoretical principle.

Stalin transformed this temporary situation into a positive theory. From the mid-1920s onward he argued that the Soviet Union could build a complete socialist society by its own efforts, independently of the world revolution. This

shift had profound consequences. Internationalism was subordinated to the diplomatic and security interests of the Soviet state. The Communist International was increasingly turned into an instrument of Soviet foreign policy rather than an independent organ of the world proletariat. The perspective of world revolution was postponed to an indefinite future, while the construction and defence of the Soviet state became the central and almost exclusive task.

This was not a minor tactical adjustment. It marked the beginning of the transformation of the workers' state into a national-bureaucratic entity that placed its own preservation above the international interests of the working class.

Strengthening of the State Instead of Its Withering Away

Marx and Lenin had taught that the dictatorship of the proletariat is a transitional form and that the state, as a special repressive apparatus, must begin to wither away as class distinctions disappear. Lenin in *The State and Revolution* had insisted that the Soviet state was already a state "in the process of withering away."

Stalin reversed this perspective. He developed the thesis that the state must be strengthened to the maximum as socialism advances, because the class struggle intensifies rather than weakens. This theory justified the continuous growth of the security apparatus, the concentration of power in the hands of the bureaucracy, and the use of mass repression against both real and imagined enemies. The state did not begin to wither; it became more powerful, more centralised and more independent of the working masses.

The result was the opposite of the Marxist-Leninist perspective: instead of the progressive replacement of the government of persons by the administration of things, there emerged a hypertrophied bureaucratic state that stood above society and ruled by command and terror.

Transformation of Democratic Centralism into Bureaucratic Centralism

Lenin had defined democratic centralism as the combination of free discussion inside the party with unity of action. He defended the right of minorities to express their views and fought against the transformation of the party into a hierarchical apparatus.

Under Stalin democratic centralism was emptied of its democratic content. Real debate inside the party was progressively eliminated. The ban on

factions, originally adopted in 1921 as a temporary measure under conditions of extreme danger, was turned into a permanent instrument for the suppression of all criticism. Opposition was no longer answered by argument but by administrative measures, expulsion and, later, physical destruction. The Central Committee and the Party Congresses ceased to be living bodies of collective leadership and became instruments for the ratification of decisions already taken at the top.

The party was transformed from the vanguard of the working class into a hierarchical transmission belt for the will of the leadership. Loyalty to the leader replaced loyalty to the principles of Marxism. This bureaucratic centralism was the organisational expression of the rise of a privileged caste that had separated itself from the working class and ruled in its name.

These three changes — the theory of Socialism in One Country, the permanent strengthening of the state, and the conversion of democratic centralism into bureaucratic centralism — form the core of the Stalinist distortion. They mark the point at which the workers' state began to be transformed into an instrument of bureaucratic rule, in fundamental opposition to the teachings of Marx and Lenin.

Personality Cult and the Suppression of Inner-Party Democracy

Marx and Engels had always rejected any form of leader worship. Lenin maintained a collective style of leadership and engaged in open theoretical struggle with his closest comrades. He never allowed his own person to be placed above the party or the class.

Under Stalin a personality cult of unprecedented proportions was systematically constructed. Stalin was presented as the infallible genius, the sole correct interpreter of Marxism-Leninism, the father of the peoples. History was rewritten to exaggerate his role and to diminish or erase the contributions of other Bolshevik leaders. Portraits, slogans and ritual praise filled public life. Criticism of the leader became equivalent to treason.

This cult was not a secondary phenomenon. It was the ideological expression of the concentration of power in the hands of one man and of the bureaucratic caste that surrounded him. Inner-party democracy, already weakened, was finally destroyed. The party ceased to be a living political organism and became an apparatus for the transmission and celebration of the leader's will. The principle of collective leadership, which Lenin had defended to the end of his life, was replaced by the personal dictatorship of Stalin.

Mass Purges and the Destruction of the Old Bolshevik Generation

The most tragic and criminal expression of the Stalinist system was the mass purges of the 1930s, culminating in the Great Terror of 1936–1938. These purges went far beyond the repression of actual counter-revolutionary conspiracies. They systematically destroyed the generation of Old Bolsheviks who had made the October Revolution, led the Civil War, and built the early Soviet state.

Leading figures of the party, the government, the army and the Comintern were arrested, forced to confess to fantastic crimes, and executed or sent to the camps. The military high command was decimated on the eve of the Second World War. Entire layers of the technical intelligentsia, the scientific cadres and the experienced administrators were wiped out. The criterion was no longer political opposition in the ordinary sense; it was the elimination of anyone who possessed independent authority, historical memory, or the capacity to criticise the new order.

This was not the defence of the proletarian dictatorship against its enemies. It was the physical destruction of the living link between the October Revolution and the new generation. In place of the old revolutionary cadres there arose a new bureaucracy selected for loyalty rather than for revolutionary experience or theoretical understanding. The purges completed the transformation of the party and the state into instruments of a privileged caste that ruled by fear.

Forced Collectivisation and the Break with Lenin’s Peasant Policy

Lenin’s policy toward the peasantry had been based on the alliance with the poor and middle peasants, on the isolation of the kulaks, and on the principle of voluntary cooperation. He had explicitly rejected the idea of forcing the middle peasantry into collective farms by administrative pressure.

Stalin abandoned this policy. From 1929 onward forced collectivisation was carried out on a mass scale. The slogan of the “liquidation of the kulaks as a class” was applied in such a way that large numbers of middle peasants were also swept away. Grain was requisitioned with extreme severity. The result was a catastrophic famine, the destruction of a significant part of the livestock, and the lasting demoralisation of the peasantry.

Collectivisation in itself was not contrary to Marxism. The transformation of small peasant agriculture into large-scale socialised production was a historical necessity. But the method chosen by Stalin — administrative coercion, mass deportation, and the disregard of the real relationship of forces in the countryside — was the opposite of Lenin’s approach. It replaced the

patient winning of the peasantry by example and material advantage with command from above. The cost in human lives and in the productive capacity of agriculture was enormous, and the political alliance between the working class and the peasantry was severely damaged.

These three further features — the personality cult, the mass purges, and forced collectivisation — reveal the full depth of the Stalinist degeneration. They show a system that had broken with the democratic, internationalist and class-based methods of Marx and Lenin and had substituted bureaucratic command, terror and the cult of the individual leader.

National Policy: From Self-Determination to Centralised Control and Deportations

Lenin had developed a clear and democratic policy on the national question. He defended the right of nations to self-determination, including the right to secession, as a necessary condition for the voluntary unity of the proletariat of oppressed and oppressor nations. The early Soviet government recognised the independence of Finland, Poland and the Baltic states and created a federal structure that, at least in principle, respected the equality of the peoples of the former Tsarist empire.

Under Stalin this policy was progressively emptied of its democratic content. The federal forms remained, but real power was concentrated in the central apparatus in Moscow. National cultures and languages were often treated with suspicion. During the 1930s and especially during the Second World War entire peoples — among them the Crimean Tatars, the Chechens, the Ingush, the Volga Germans and others — were accused of collective treason and deported under conditions of extreme brutality. These mass deportations had nothing in common with Lenin’s national policy. They were the actions of a centralised bureaucratic state that treated entire nationalities as objects of administrative punishment.

The shift from the right of self-determination to centralised control and collective punishment marked another decisive break with the internationalist and democratic principles of Marx and Lenin.

Theoretical Dogmatism and the Replacement of Living Marxism by Official Formulas

Marx’s method was materialist dialectics applied to the concrete analysis of concrete conditions. Lenin continued this method: he insisted on the living study of reality, on the readiness to change tactics when the situation changed, and on open theoretical struggle inside the party.

Under Stalin Marxism was transformed into a closed system of official formulas. Philosophical, historical and economic questions were decided by administrative authority rather than by scientific debate. Stalin's own writings were elevated to the status of final truth. History was rewritten to fit the needs of the current leadership. The rich, critical, developing character of Marxist theory was replaced by a scholastic orthodoxy that served to justify every turn of policy and to silence every critic.

This theoretical dogmatism was not a secondary cultural phenomenon. It was the intellectual expression of the bureaucratic regime. Once the living method of Marxism had been replaced by a set of fixed dogmas, the regime could present every act of repression, every bureaucratic measure and every nationalist turn as the consistent application of "Marxism-Leninism." In reality it was the opposite: the mummification of theory in the service of a privileged caste.

With these final points the picture of Stalinism as a distortion and degeneration is complete. The theory of Socialism in One Country, the permanent strengthening of the state, the conversion of democratic centralism into bureaucratic centralism, the personality cult, the mass purges, forced collectivisation, the nationalist turn in national policy, and the reduction of Marxism to official dogma together constitute a coherent system that broke with the fundamental principles of Marx and Lenin. What remained was a bureaucratic, nationalist and terrorist regime that ruled in the name of the working class while destroying the living content of the proletarian revolution.

Comparative Analysis on Key Questions

The differences between Marx, Lenin and Stalin can now be examined side by side on the decisive questions of theory and practice. This comparative method makes the break between the authentic Marxist-Leninist tradition and its Stalinist distortion fully visible.

1. The Nature and Future of the State

Marx
The state is a product of irreconcilable class antagonisms and an instrument of the ruling class. After the proletarian revolution it takes the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat — the organised power of the working class. This form is transitional. As class distinctions disappear, the state as a special repressive apparatus withers away. The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things.

Lenin
Lenin restored and defended Marx's teaching against opportunist distortions. In *The State and Revolution* he insisted that the proletariat must smash the old bourgeois state machine and replace it with a new type of state based on the Soviets. This Soviet state is already a state in the process of withering away: officials are elected and recallable, paid workers' wages, the armed people replace the standing army. The ultimate goal remains the disappearance of the state in a classless society.

Stalin
Stalin reversed the perspective. He advanced the thesis that the state must be strengthened to the maximum as socialism advances, because the class struggle intensifies. The security apparatus, the bureaucracy and the centralised power of the state grew continuously. The withering away of the state was postponed to a distant and indefinite future. In practice the state became a hypertrophied bureaucratic machine standing above the masses.

Conclusion on this point
Marx and Lenin saw the dictatorship of the proletariat as a temporary bridge to a stateless society. Stalin turned it into a permanent and self-reinforcing bureaucratic power.

2. The Character of the Party and Its Relation to the Masses

Marx
The party is the political expression of the working class as a whole. It must be international in character and free of any cult of personality. The emancipation of the working class is the act of the working class itself; no substitute can take its place.

Lenin
Lenin developed the theory of the vanguard party of professional revolutionaries guided by scientific theory. Democratic centralism combines free discussion with unity of action. The party is the most conscious section of the proletariat, closely linked to the masses through the Soviets and other mass organisations. It educates the class and learns from it. Lenin repeatedly warned against the danger of the party becoming a bureaucratic apparatus standing above the workers.

Stalin
Under Stalin the party was transformed into a hierarchical transmission belt for the will of the leadership. Real inner-party democracy was destroyed. The ban on factions became a permanent instrument of repression. The personality cult placed the leader above the party and the class. The living

relationship between the vanguard and the masses was replaced by command from above and passive obedience from below.

Conclusion on this point
For Marx and Lenin the party is an instrument of the self-emancipation of the working class. Under Stalin it became an instrument of bureaucratic rule over the working class.

3. Internationalism versus National-Bureaucratic Isolation

Marx
The working class has no fatherland. The proletarian revolution is international in content. The famous slogan “Workers of all countries, unite!” expresses the fundamental principle that the emancipation of the workers is a world-wide task.

Lenin
Lenin remained a consistent internationalist. He regarded the Russian Revolution as the first link in the chain of the world revolution. He founded the Communist International in order to organise the proletariat of all countries for the overthrow of capitalism on a world scale. The defence of the Soviet republic was inseparable from the advancement of the international revolution. Socialism in one country was never elevated by Lenin into a self-sufficient strategic goal.

Stalin
Stalin elevated “Socialism in One Country” into a permanent doctrine. The interests of the Soviet state were placed above the interests of the world proletariat. The Communist International was increasingly subordinated to the diplomatic needs of the Soviet government. Internationalism was reduced to solidarity with the Soviet Union as a state, rather than solidarity with the revolutionary struggle of the workers of all countries. The perspective of world revolution was deferred to an indefinite future.

Conclusion on this point
Marx and Lenin placed the international character of the proletarian struggle at the centre of their theory and practice. Stalin subordinated internationalism to the national-bureaucratic interests of the Soviet state apparatus.

These three comparisons already reveal the fundamental break. On the nature of the state, the character of the party, and the question of internationalism, Marx and Lenin stand on one side; Stalinism stands on the other. The remaining questions — economic policy, the peasantry, the treatment of specialists and the philosophical method — will confirm the same line of demarcation.

4. Economic Policy and the Role of Planning from Above versus Associated Producers

Marx
Marx analysed the anarchy of capitalist production and the necessity of replacing it with the conscious control of the associated producers. Once the means of production have been socialised, the working class itself, organised as a collective, must regulate production according to a common plan. Marx rejected both the utopian invention of rigid schemes and any form of planning imposed from above by a bureaucracy standing outside the producers. The goal is the free association of the producers, not the command of a state apparatus over the working masses.

Lenin
Lenin remained faithful to this perspective while adapting it to the concrete conditions of a devastated and backward country. During the Civil War the measures of War Communism were forced upon the Soviet government by military necessity. As soon as the war ended, Lenin introduced the New Economic Policy, allowing private trade and small-scale enterprise while keeping the commanding heights of the economy in the hands of the workers' state. He repeatedly emphasised the need to learn from bourgeois specialists, to develop cooperatives, and to draw the masses themselves into the work of accounting and control. Planning was necessary, but it had to be linked to the initiative of the producers and to the alliance with the peasantry.

Stalin
Under Stalin economic policy was transformed into hyper-centralised command planning imposed from above. Targets were set by the central apparatus; local initiative was stifled; and administrative pressure replaced material incentives and voluntary cooperation. The Five-Year Plans achieved rapid growth in heavy industry, but at the cost of extreme strain on the working class and the peasantry, the growth of a privileged managerial layer, and the suppression of genuine workers' control. Planning from above by a bureaucratic apparatus took the place of the democratic regulation of production by the associated producers that Marx and Lenin had envisaged.

Conclusion on this point
Marx and Lenin saw socialist planning as the conscious activity of the associated producers. Stalin replaced this with bureaucratic command planning that elevated the apparatus above the working class.

5. Treatment of the Peasantry and the Agrarian Question

Marx
Marx recognised that in countries with a large peasantry the proletariat must win the rural poor as allies. Large landed property (the feudal or capitalist estates) must be expropriated. Small peasant property, however, cannot be abolished by decree; the transition to cooperative production must be based on the voluntary decision of the peasants themselves, aided by the example and the material assistance of the workers' state.

Lenin
Lenin developed this approach into a precise strategic line. He divided the peasantry into poor, middle and rich (kulak) layers. The proletariat's firm alliance was with the poor peasants; the middle peasants were to be neutralised or won over; the kulaks were a hostile class. The Decree on Land gave the land to the peasants and sealed the alliance. Lenin explicitly rejected the idea of forcing the middle peasantry into collective farms by administrative coercion. The New Economic Policy further strengthened the economic link between the working class and the labouring peasantry.

Stalin
Stalin abandoned Lenin's differentiated and voluntary policy. Forced collectivisation was carried out at breakneck speed. The slogan of the "liquidation of the kulaks as a class" was applied so broadly that large numbers of middle peasants were also destroyed. Mass deportations, the confiscation of livestock and grain, and the resulting famine caused immense human and economic losses. The political alliance between the working class and the peasantry was severely damaged. What had been a policy of patient alliance under Lenin became a policy of administrative war against the countryside under Stalin.

Conclusion on this point
Marx and Lenin treated the peasantry as a necessary ally to be won by a combination of economic measures and political persuasion. Stalin treated large sections of the peasantry as an object of bureaucratic coercion and collective punishment.

These two further comparisons confirm the same fundamental break already visible on the questions of the state, the party and internationalism. The remaining points — the treatment of specialists and former ruling layers, and the philosophical method — will complete the side-by-side examination.

6. Attitude to Specialists, the Intelligentsia and Former Nobility

Marx
Marx’s criterion was class position and political attitude, not personal origin. The revolution expropriates the means of production; it does not aim at the physical destruction of every individual who belonged to the former ruling classes. Those who accept the new order and are prepared to live by their own labour can be integrated into the new society. The Paris Commune, which Marx regarded as the first example of the dictatorship of the proletariat, combined firm measures against armed counter-revolution with the principle of the self-government of the producers.

Lenin
Lenin applied this approach concretely. He insisted that the working class in a backward country must utilise the technical, scientific and administrative knowledge of bourgeois specialists, placing them under workers’ control. Many military officers, engineers and administrators from the old society, including members of the former nobility who possessed useful skills, were integrated into the Red Army and the Soviet state apparatus, provided they accepted Soviet power. Lenin’s policy was one of class differentiation: repression of active enemies, utilisation and integration of non-hostile elements. Personal property earned through service was not the primary target; the target was the economic power of the exploiting classes.

Stalin
Under Stalin this differentiated policy was abandoned. The mass purges of the 1930s destroyed large sections of the old Bolshevik cadre, the military command, the technical intelligentsia and many people of noble or educated origin, often without regard to their actual political attitude. Collective punishment and social origin frequently replaced concrete class analysis. The result was the loss of an enormous amount of accumulated experience and skill, and the replacement of independent-minded cadres by a bureaucracy selected for loyalty. This was not the class policy of Marx and Lenin but the terror of a bureaucratic caste that feared any layer capable of independent judgement.

Conclusion on this point
Marx and Lenin stood for the expropriation of economic power combined with the integration of non-hostile specialists and members of the former ruling classes. Stalin replaced this with indiscriminate destruction that weakened the country and the revolution.

7. Philosophical Method: Living Dialectics versus Rigid Dogmatism

Marx
Marx's method is materialist dialectics applied to history and political economy. He analysed capitalism as a living process full of internal contradictions. Theory is a guide to action, constantly tested and enriched by the real movement of history. Marx rejected both mechanical materialism and idealist schemas.

Lenin
Lenin continued and defended this living method. In *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* he fought against idealist revisions of Marxism. In his political practice he insisted on the concrete analysis of concrete conditions, on the readiness to change tactics when reality changed, and on open theoretical struggle inside the party. Dialectics for Lenin was a tool for understanding and transforming the world, not a set of fixed formulas.

Stalin
Under Stalin Marxism was transformed into a closed system of official dogmas. Philosophical and historical questions were decided by administrative authority. Stalin's own formulations were treated as final and infallible. The rich, critical, developing character of Marxist theory was replaced by scholastic repetition and the condemnation of every independent thought as "deviation." Living dialectics gave way to rigid dogmatism that served to justify every turn of bureaucratic policy.

Conclusion on this point
Marx and Lenin practised a living, critical, dialectical method. Stalin replaced it with a dogmatic orthodoxy that froze theory into a tool of bureaucratic power.

Summary of the Comparative Analysis
On every decisive question — the state, the party, internationalism, economic policy, the peasantry, the treatment of specialists and former ruling layers, and the philosophical method — Marx and Lenin stand together on one side, while Stalinism stands on the other. The break is not one of degree or of historical circumstance alone; it is a qualitative break between the theory and practice of proletarian self-emancipation and the theory and practice of bureaucratic domination.

The Historical Roots of the Degeneration

The transformation of the Soviet regime under Stalin cannot be understood as a simple accident or as the product of one man's evil will alone. It arose from the interaction of severe objective difficulties and a subjective factor that

turned those difficulties into a full bureaucratic degeneration. A clear Marxist analysis must examine both sides without reducing one to the other.

Objective Difficulties: Isolation, Backwardness, Civil War Losses

The October Revolution took place in a country that was economically and culturally backward compared with the advanced capitalist states of Western Europe. The First World War and the subsequent Civil War inflicted catastrophic destruction on the already weak productive forces. Industry was ruined, transport collapsed, and large parts of the working class were killed or dispersed. The most class-conscious workers had been absorbed into the Red Army and the new state apparatus, leaving the factories with a less experienced and often demoralised labour force.

Still more decisive was the isolation of the revolution. Lenin and the Bolsheviks had counted on the victory of the proletarian revolution in the advanced countries, especially Germany. The failure of the revolutionary wave in Europe left the Soviet republic alone, surrounded by a hostile capitalist world. The young workers' state was forced to devote enormous resources to military defence and to the simple task of economic survival. Under these conditions the apparatus of the state and the party necessarily grew, and the danger of its separation from the working class increased.

These objective factors created a favourable soil for bureaucratic deformation. They do not, however, explain why the deformation took the particular form it did, nor why it became irreversible after Lenin's death.

Subjective Factor: Stalin's Methods and the Rise of a Bureaucratic Caste

The subjective factor was decisive. Lenin had seen the danger clearly. In his final writings he warned against the growth of bureaucracy, against the concentration of too much power in Stalin's hands, and against the rude and administrative methods that Stalin displayed. He proposed concrete organisational measures to combat these dangers.

After Lenin's death these warnings were ignored. Stalin, as General Secretary, used the apparatus he controlled to accumulate power, to promote loyal cadres, and to defeat successive oppositions. A new social layer — the bureaucracy of the party, the state, the economy and the security organs — crystallised around him. This layer enjoyed material privileges, was exempt from the hardships of ordinary workers and peasants, and developed a collective interest in the preservation and expansion of its own power.

Stalin’s personal methods — the systematic use of organisational pressure instead of political argument, the construction of a personality cult, the resort to mass terror against both real and imagined opponents — accelerated and consolidated the rise of this bureaucratic caste. The objective difficulties of isolation and backwardness were real; the choice to answer them by destroying inner-party democracy, by elevating the apparatus above the class, and by turning Marxism into a state dogma was not inevitable. It was the result of a definite political course personified by Stalin and supported by the emerging bureaucracy.

Thus the degeneration was the product of the interaction between the difficult objective conditions of the isolated Soviet state and the subjective methods that allowed a privileged bureaucratic caste to usurp the power of the working class. The responsibility for the particular form and the irreversible character of that degeneration lies primarily with the political course pursued after Lenin’s death.

Why the Degeneration Was Not Inevitable – Lenin’s Warnings and the Path Not Taken

The objective difficulties facing the Soviet republic after 1921 were real and severe. Isolation, economic ruin and the losses of the Civil War created a strong pressure toward the growth of the state apparatus and the separation of that apparatus from the working class. Yet these conditions did not make the full bureaucratic degeneration under Stalin inevitable. A different political course remained possible, and Lenin himself pointed to it in the last period of his life.

In his final letters and articles (the Testament and the writings on the Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspection) Lenin diagnosed the danger with precision. He noted the excessive concentration of power in the hands of the General Secretary, the rude and administrative methods that Stalin displayed, and the risk that the party and state apparatus would become alienated from the masses. He proposed concrete counter-measures: the enlargement of the Central Committee with workers from the bench, the reorganisation of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspection into a powerful instrument of control from below, the removal of Stalin from the post of General Secretary, and the strengthening of collective leadership.

These proposals were not secondary organisational suggestions. They expressed a clear political line: the defence of proletarian democracy inside the party and the state, the struggle against the rising bureaucracy, and the preservation of the living link between the vanguard and the working class. Had this line been followed after Lenin’s death, the subsequent history of the

Soviet Union would have been different. The apparatus could still have grown under the pressure of isolation, but it need not have transformed itself into a privileged caste ruling by terror and personality cult. Inner-party debate could have been preserved, the alliance with the peasantry could have been maintained on Leninist lines, and the internationalist orientation of the revolution could have been defended.

The fact that Lenin’s warnings were ignored and his proposals rejected was therefore decisive. The degeneration was the result of a definite political choice: the choice to strengthen the apparatus against the party and the class, to replace collective leadership with personal power, and to abandon the method of patient class alliance in favour of administrative command. Objective difficulties explain the soil in which the bureaucracy grew; they do not explain why the seeds of Lenin’s alternative policy were deliberately left to wither.

In this sense the Stalinist outcome was not the only possible continuation of the October Revolution. It was the victory of one tendency — the bureaucratic tendency — over the proletarian-democratic tendency that Lenin had fought to preserve until his last breath. The path not taken remains the measure of what a genuine continuation of Marx and Lenin would have required: the relentless struggle against bureaucracy, the defence of inner-party democracy, the maintenance of the alliance with the labouring peasantry, and the unbroken orientation toward the world revolution.

Conclusions and the Tasks of Genuine Marxism-Leninism

Summary of the Fundamental Break between Marx–Lenin and Stalinism

The preceding chapters have demonstrated that the differences between Marx, Lenin and Stalin are not secondary or merely historical. They constitute a fundamental break in theory and in practice.

Marx founded scientific socialism on the basis of historical materialism, the critique of political economy, the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat as a transitional form, the perspective of the withering away of the state, proletarian internationalism, and the principle of the self-emancipation of the working class. He drew a clear distinction between the expropriation of the means of production and the preservation of personal property, and he approached the former ruling classes from the standpoint of class analysis rather than collective vengeance.

Lenin developed this foundation for the epoch of imperialism. He analysed monopoly capitalism, created the organisational forms of the vanguard party and the Soviets, forged the alliance of the proletariat with the labouring peasantry, upheld consistent internationalism through the Communist International, applied flexible economic tactics, utilised non-hostile specialists from the old society, and warned explicitly against the dangers of bureaucracy and the concentration of power. In all essential respects he remained the faithful and creative continuer of Marx.

Stalinism broke with both. It elevated “Socialism in One Country” into a permanent doctrine, replaced the perspective of the withering away of the state with the permanent strengthening of a bureaucratic apparatus, converted democratic centralism into bureaucratic centralism, constructed a personality cult, carried out mass purges that destroyed the old Bolshevik generation, imposed forced collectivisation, subordinated national policy to centralised control and deportations, and reduced living Marxist theory to official dogma. The result was a regime that preserved state ownership of the means of production while abolishing proletarian democracy and internationalism — a bureaucratic deformation of the workers’ state.

The line of demarcation is therefore clear. On one side stand Marx and Lenin: the theory and practice of the self-emancipation of the working class, of proletarian democracy, of internationalism, and of the progressive disappearance of the state. On the other side stands Stalinism: the theory and practice of bureaucratic command, national isolation, personality cult and mass terror.

Restoration of the Principles of Proletarian Democracy, Internationalism and the Withering Away of the State

The tasks of genuine Marxism-Leninism flow directly from this differentiation. They consist in the restoration and defence of the principles that Stalinism abandoned.

First, the restoration of proletarian democracy. The dictatorship of the proletariat must again be understood as the rule of the working class organised as the ruling class, exercised through mass organisations that are genuinely elected, recallable and linked to the producers. The party must be restored as the conscious vanguard of the class, not as a hierarchical apparatus standing above it. Inner-party democracy, the right of criticism, and collective leadership are not optional luxuries; they are essential conditions for preventing bureaucratic degeneration.

Second, the restoration of proletarian internationalism. The struggle of the working class is international in content. No national workers’ state can regard its own construction as a self-sufficient final goal. Solidarity with the

revolutionary movements of the workers of all countries, and the orientation toward the world revolution, must again stand at the centre of strategy and tactics.

Third, the restoration of the perspective of the withering away of the state. The state remains necessary as long as class distinctions and the danger of counter-revolution persist. But it must be a state of the Commune or Soviet type — already in the process of withering away — and not a self-perpetuating bureaucratic machine. Every measure that draws the masses themselves into the administration of society, that reduces the privileges of officials, and that prepares the transfer of public functions to the associated producers, is a step toward the fulfilment of the Marxist programme.

These three principles — proletarian democracy, internationalism, and the withering away of the state — constitute the living core of the teaching of Marx and Lenin. Their restoration is the condition for any genuine continuation of the revolutionary tradition.

The Continuing Relevance of the Differentiation for the Struggle against Capitalism and Bureaucracy Today

The differentiation between Marx, Lenin and Stalin is not a purely historical question. It retains direct practical importance for the struggle of the working class in the present epoch.

Capitalism has entered its imperialist stage, as Lenin analysed, and has developed into the global system dominated by the great powers and the transnational monopolies of today. The parasitic character of the modern bourgeois class — the billionaire oligarchs and the corporate oligopolies — confirms Marx’s analysis of surplus value and Lenin’s analysis of monopoly capital. The task of the working class remains the expropriation of the means of production and the overthrow of the bourgeois state.

At the same time, the experience of the twentieth century has shown that the victory of the proletariat does not automatically guarantee the progressive realisation of the Marxist programme. Where the working class is unable to maintain democratic control over its own state and party, a bureaucratic caste can arise that rules in the name of the workers while suppressing their independent activity. The Stalinist experience is the classic demonstration of this danger. Any future revolutionary movement that fails to draw the lessons of that experience risks repeating the same degeneration.

The struggle against capitalism and the struggle against bureaucracy are therefore inseparable. Genuine Marxism-Leninism must equip the working class with a clear understanding of both enemies: the parasitic bourgeois class

that owns the means of production and exploits the masses for profit, and the bureaucratic deformation that can arise inside the workers' movement itself when proletarian democracy is abandoned. Only by holding firmly to the principles of Marx and Lenin — self-emancipation, internationalism, and the perspective of the withering away of the state — can the working class prepare itself to conquer power and to retain that power in its own hands.

Final Statement

Marx remains the founder and the permanent foundation of scientific socialism. His analysis of capitalism, his theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and his perspective of a classless, stateless society constitute the unbreakable theoretical basis of the revolutionary movement.

Lenin remains the great revolutionary who developed Marxism for the epoch of imperialism. His theory of monopoly capitalism, his organisational and strategic contributions, and his defence of proletarian democracy and internationalism constitute the necessary continuation and enrichment of Marx's work.

Stalinism remains a parasitic distortion that twisted the teaching of Marx and Lenin into a system of bureaucratic tyranny, national isolation and mass terror. It must be clearly distinguished from both, studied as a negative historical experience, and rejected as a model for the future.

The task of those who stand on the ground of genuine Marxism-Leninism is therefore clear: to defend and develop the living content of the theory founded by Marx and creatively advanced by Lenin, to combat every form of bureaucratic degeneration, and to prepare the working class for the overthrow of capitalism and the construction of a society in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.

Appendix / Closing Material

Selected Key Quotations for Reference

On the State and Its Withering Away

Marx (Critique of the Gotha Programme, 1875):
“Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.”

Engels (Anti-Dühring):
“The state is not ‘abolished’. It withers away.”

Lenin (The State and Revolution, 1917):
“The state is a product and a manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms… The proletariat needs a state — this is repeated by all the opportunists… but they forget to add that what the proletariat needs is only a withering away state…”

On Internationalism

Marx & Engels (Communist Manifesto, 1848):
“Workers of all countries, unite!”

Lenin (on the founding of the Communist International):
The Russian Revolution is only the beginning of the world revolution.

On the Party and Self-Emancipation

Marx:
“The emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself.”

Lenin (What Is to Be Done?):
Socialist consciousness must be brought to the workers from without by a party of professional revolutionaries guided by theory.

On Property

Marx & Engels (Communist Manifesto):
“The distinguishing feature of Communism is not the abolition of property generally, but the abolition of bourgeois property.”

Short Chronological Note on the Main Works Used

- 1848 – Marx & Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*

- 1859 – Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (Preface)
- 1867 – Marx, *Capital*, Volume I
- 1875 – Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*
- 1878 – Engels, *Anti-Dühring*
- 1902 – Lenin, *What Is to Be Done?*
- 1916 – Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*
- 1917 – Lenin, *The State and Revolution*
- 1921 – Lenin, materials of the Tenth Party Congress (introduction of NEP)
- 1922–1923 – Lenin, final letters and articles (Testament)
- 1924 onward – Stalin’s writings and policies developing “Socialism in One Country,” forced collectivisation, the theory of the intensification of class struggle under socialism, and the organisational practices of the 1930s

These works form the primary textual basis for the comparisons drawn in the present treatise.